



On Earth, as it is



JANE LOVELL

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Ghosts

There are ghosts in this house.
They swim like dolphins between rooms,
arms at their sides, spines slick as snakes.

Their eyes are black, cut from coal,
their skewbald skin stitched from
a hundred lesser creatures.

I try to tempt them closer, offer my
outstretched hands in that way
of Jesus in the old books.

They tilt their heads as if considering
their options, then flick away
to darker corners.

I know their sadness has hardened.
They are dirty and sly and getting by
on impulse and cunning.

They keep tight in their mouths
the roar of the sea, the poisonous sky.
They are ghosts of our days,
of our future.

Hatchling

Myanmar, the Hukawng Valley.
Never-to-become-skylark, hatched
to fly but drowned floundering in resin,
is held up to the light.
Feathers. Clawed foot. Beak.

X-rayed, carbon-dated, catalogued.
Cretaceous.
Ninety million years of soft tissue
and plumage to examine,
each filament brown as boiled sugar.

Wrong-footed by an unknown call,
slipping from the haphazard nest,
it tumbled to its death,
the last whirr of wingbeat, its claws,
catching only shadows.

From another planet, a distant universe,
we could watch it fall.
We could catch it, set it safely down,
watch it blinking, rebalancing its head
on that thin-string neck.

The light is amber.
Something caught, a moment
unaware, its wisp-legs broken,
strands of tar its wings,
settles and stills.

Vitulus

(i)

He suckled. He grazed.

Grasses, buttercups, a mash of nameless leaves
and stems foaming on his eely tongue.

He had the whole Sky as his mother,
the Earth as his soul.

(ii)

The blade works from throat to tail:
spill and tumble, organs a muddle of bloody parcels
unfolding onto stone, slick and remote.

His tongue hangs from the slack jaw.
How his eyes show shock and sky
in their shine.

(iii)

We soak the hide in lime, prod it down with staffs.
It rises and looms, settles.
We smart and burn in the haze.

Eight days gone, we haul out its pale slap,
nail it to a frame, scrape the last hairs away.
A skim of fat gathers on the blade.

Limed and scudded, the pelt dries and stiffens,
a map of paths wandering virgin terrain.

(iv)

The world is drawn inside your skin,
its scribed parchment shrinking at light;
the endless raking of the lunellum remembered
in its translucence.

Undulations appear over time; a shift
in the landscape. A memory of green:
soilburst of shoots ruckling the meadow
below your hooves.



Daseleys Sand

Pandora Sand

Hull Beacon

Hull Sand

Low Water Mark

Black Buoys Knock

Lynn

Channel

Bull Dog Sand

reast Sand

Admiralty Pt.

Admiral's Fm.

Coastguard Sta.

Terryington

Balaclay

Greenland Inn

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